

July 13 2009

Ms Claire Moore
Chair
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Moore

Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

I write to express my concern about the above bills. I understand that these bills will enable Medicare funding, access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium support for midwives providing care for women to give birth in hospital.

Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. It is not acceptable however to exclude homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. By doing this Australia is totally out of step with nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand.

These nations support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose homebirth.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent homebirth midwives from registering. I believe this to be an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include homebirth within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

I gave birth to my son in Bellingen Hospital. My partner and I had planned for me to give birth at home but our midwife was not available on this day so we reluctantly went to the hospital. After some disappointment with the surroundings and cleanliness of the hospital (blood and cloths left in the bathroom from previous patient) we ended up having a positive experience. Another homebirth midwife (a previous midwife of the hospital) came to assist us with a natural child birth. After having this experience I would choose to give birth at home next time. I believe that the environment of the hospital slowed my labour down considerably. I am not a big risk taker but having been born at home myself and never ill enough to require hospitalization I feel that the home is the best place for me to give birth. I have faith that my body can perform this ancient task. All I need is a caring, well paid, insured, experienced, available midwife.

Yours sincerely

Elisabeth Saunders